

This method had no followers, but nevertheless it stimulated a short-lived interest and its mechanism was published in the pages of the authoritative "Bollettino di Zoologia" (Trischitta 1952) edited by the Unione Zoologica Italiana.

Summary

After the publication of Linnaeus' *Systema Naturae* (1758) binomial nomenclature was also introduced in Italy and adopted by several famous naturalists of the 18th century, such as Giovanni Antonio Scopoli and the Abbé Giovanni Ignazio Molina. By the beginning of the 19th century its use was consolidated thanks to the work of Paolo Savi and Carlo Luciano Bonaparte. Under the leadership of the latter scientist the Quarta Riunione degli Scienziati Italiani was held in Padua in September 1842 and, on this occasion, the Strickland Code, subsequently translated into Italian, was recommended since it fixed the 12th edition of *Systema Naturae* as starting point for scientific nomenclature.

Subsequently, voyages of exploration and the systematic collecting of zoological material started the golden era of descriptive zoology, which had Tommaso Salvadori (1835–1923) and Enrico Hillyer Giglioli (1845–1909) as its most distinguished representatives in Italian ornithology. Between the 19th and the 20th century the German-speaking ornithologists Ernst Hartert, Otto Kleinschmidt and Victor von Tschusi introduced the subspecies concept and began to use trinomial nomenclature consistently in their writings. In Italy this new school found an eminent supporter in Count Ettore Arrigoni degli Oddi (1867–1942), who in 1902 described his first new subspecies of Italian birds using trinomials, in conflict with the old school of Salvadori and Giglioli.

At about the same time in England a similar situation occurred, between the younger Hartert and the older ornithologists such as Richard Bowdler Sharpe, Philip Lutley Sclater and Alfred Newton. The controversy which ensued lasted for about twenty years and is still remembered thanks to private correspondence and articles in scientific periodicals by the authors involved; though sometimes extremely polemic, their tone was frequently enlivened by humour as is shown, for instance, in Giglioli's writings.

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Scopoli, Linnaeus and the Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*

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While examining letters written to Carl Linnaeus (Råshult 1707–Hammarby 1778) by Giovanni Antonio Scopoli (Cavalese 1723–Pavia 1788) now preserved in the Linnean Society's Library, London, and the respective replies published by Cobelli & Delaiti (1889) and recently by Soban (1995), we found interesting details on the nomenclature of some animals including the Edible Dormouse *Myoxus glis* (Violani & Zava 1995) and the Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*. This bird was not included in the tenth edition of *Systema Naturae* (1758) probably because being a species foreign to Sweden it was unfamiliar to Linnaeus. Scopoli was a faithful correspondent of Linnaeus. He was employed by the Austrian Imperial Government as a physician to the quicksilver miners of Idria in Carniola (the region around Ljubljana in Slovenia) and his salary was supplemented by the tax money collected on wine sold in the area (Scopoli 1786–1788). Although isolated, Scopoli cultivated interests in many fields of the natural history of Carniola, botanizing, collecting insects and making observations on the local birds, during a long residence in Idria and on his trips through Slovenia and Friuli.

He wanted to send a specimen and communicate first-hand details of the Wallcreeper to Linnaeus so that his Swedish correspondent could include it in a future revised edition of *Systema Naturae*. In a long letter to Linnaeus, dated 28 January 1762, Scopoli announced that he had sent a *Upupa muraria* in a box together with other scientific material. However Linnaeus was unable to find the bird in the consignment when he opened the box, and so noted down on the left margin of Scopoli's letter: "*Hanc non reperi in cistula; certe neglexit imponere Scopoli . . .*" ["I did not find this in the box; certainly Scopoli must have forgotten to put it in . . ."].

On 11 February 1762, the Italian author apologized for his negligence and wrote: "*. . . In cysta, pro Te, Cl. Gronovio missa, non invenies Picum murarium Aldrov . . . Nescio enim quo fato, apud me denuo remanserit, mittam tamen alia vice. Avis haec non est Picus, sed meo iudicio Upupa corpore supra cinereo, gula alba abdomine cauda alisq. nigris: basi remigibusq. primariis semirubris: tribus primis maculis duabus albis . . .*" ["*. . . In the box, sent to you through the celebrated Gronovius, you will not find the Picus murarius of Aldrovandi . . . I do not know by what mischance it remained with me, but I will send it some other way. This bird is not a woodpecker, but in my judgement an Hoopoe, with ash grey upperparts, throat white, belly, tail and wings black with the base of the primaries half-red, the three outer ones with two white spots . . .*"].

At last, with a long letter written by Scopoli on 7 April 1763, Linnaeus received a specimen of the bird accompanied by an accurate description of *Merops murarius*. Scopoli wrote: "*. . . En descriptionem*